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HOSPITAL AND TRAINING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

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HOW ARE HOSPITALS TO MEET THE OBLIGATIONS WHICH THE
NEWER STANDARDS OF NURSING EDUCATION DEMAND?

(Continued from page 838, July JOURNAL)

THERE is today a conscious and an unconscious exploitation of nursing as well as an appreciation by a few of its future. We must take these factors into consideration in endeavoring to understand the viewpoint which we find when approaching superintendents of hospitals, their Boards and in fact the public at large on this subject of advanced education. It is quite improbable that they can accept it immediately after years of considering the students a financial asset instead of an educational responsibility. In presenting this scheme of ours, we must remember that we have not only educators to deal with, but hard headed business men who are endeavoring to run the hospital with as little deficit as possible. The problem of the superintendent in most cases is not how good a hospital he can run, but how little deficit he will have, as it has been my observation that a superintendent's success depends not entirely upon the quality of his administration, but largely upon being able to make ends meet. Therefore, we can not but feel more or less sympathetic with the superintendent's problem and in solving our own, we must endeavor to have the finances re-adjusted rather than look immediately to larger endowments for all hospital schools. They may come eventually but the public is not really conscious of what we mean when we speak of the separate school. They are not awake to it yet.

Public opinion in regard to hospitals at large must undergo a re-adjustment for the reason that people look upon those institutions as charitable and expect to be taken care of whether they can pay or not and when they do pay, expect to pay about half the amount it would cost for them for like consideration in a hotel in the same vicinity, disregarding nursing service, medicine, tray service, dressings, ambulance, X-ray, laboratories, operating room, etc., all of which are very expensive to maintain. The Boards of Trustees make up deficits as far as it is in their power to do so, but there is a limit even to their resources and if it were not for the School of Nursing and the student nurse who gives her unpaid service, it would be impossible for hospitals to operate under present conditions. In fact when legislation has been attempted in several of our states and a

question of barring the small hospital as an educational institution has been discussed, we are always confronted with the plea that they must have a school because they can not afford to pay graduate nurses. So this has come to be the actual status of the school in relation to the hospital, in other words, the hospital is almost entirely dependent upon student nurses for the actual bedside care of its patients. Many hospitals decrease their running expenses by a large amount of special nursing by their students at \$20 or \$25 per week and the student's board. These funds as well as tuition fees go into the hospital treasury, disregarding the financial needs of the school which has no budget or separate checking account. The school of nursing's utter dependence upon the administration of the hospital makes it impossible for it to progress if the superintendent is not in accord with the principal of the school or does not fully realize the need of progressive methods, equipment and a better prepared group of instructors and supervisors. It is the rare superintendent who does not curtail his or her deficit at the expense of the school in equipment, reference books, and supervisory staff. Not long ago, I was told by a superintendent that the board of trustees insisted upon two supervising nurses being removed in order to save expenses.

We have a very complex situation to deal with, in that it involves the responsibility for the sick of the community, operates day and night and we are endeavoring to create an educational institution comparable with our colleges of household arts.

Such an undertaking demands a woman of unusual executive ability, education and experience who knows not only the theory of administration of schools of nursing, but has combined with this a sound practical knowledge of the needs of the hospital and is sympathetic with the superintendent's economic problems. Consequently, the first necessity in every school of nursing is the proper head. No organization is better than its head, and nothing much can be accomplished until each school has a woman as its director who realizes what a school of nursing ought to be and has at least had the preparation to enable her to know how to progress along certain well established lines to advance it. It is sound economics to pay a salary commensurate with the responsibilities which the position imposes. The trained expert will save more than the extra amount of money paid in salary and at the same time enable the institution to render a wider and better service. It is not economy to pay a small salary to an inexperienced or inefficient executive. An able executive will gather about her people of a calibre equal to her own for the various departments, while an executive of lesser ability is unable to attract and hold women of more ability or experience than her own.

One of the most vital defects of the average hospital is its ignorance of what a principal of a school of nursing ought to be. Given an adequate salary and proper support, it should not be difficult for a school of nursing to secure its principal. This done, we will look to other obligations which must be met.

First those of instruction. There should be appointed as head of this department an instructor who is qualified by education and experience to teach. The woman who has simply graduated from a three-year course of training is not automatically qualified for this position nor is a well meaning, conscientious nurse who lacks the ability to inspire others. By an instructor, I mean a person who devotes her entire time to the instruction and supervision of the student nurse and who is not given other duties which would in any way interfere with this.

When other funds are not available to meet her salary, why could not tuition fees be charged and if necessary the monthly allowance decreased? There may be those who will say "We couldn't get any students if we were to do that." But it has been my experience that the schools who are really concerning themselves with better educational opportunities have the advantage of their neighbors in the number and quality of applicants.

The instructor must be provided with necessary teaching equipment and a suitable place in which to conduct her class work. The class rooms should be segregated as a teaching suite and should be available for her use continuously. Very desirable class rooms have been provided in a number of our schools at a very modest expense which would not be prohibitive in any hospital. A suite of three class rooms was partitioned off and equipped in one hospital through the generosity of a member of the Training School Committee for an outlay considerably less than \$500. It consists of a demonstration room of five beds with adjacent utility room and linen closet, a diet school and a chemical and bacteriological laboratory for ten students. This suite is in the Nurses' Home where the instructor is not liable to interruption. She has also the advantage of having equipment which is available solely for teaching purposes.

The need of a well balanced and comprehensive curriculum is obvious. An excellent outline has been prepared by the League of Nursing Education and can be obtained at the National Headquarters in New York City. The hospital facilities should be utilized to the fullest extent in carrying out this curriculum and can be supplemented by affiliation with other educational institutions in the vicinity, as the high school or technical school and college. There are several ways of bringing this about without entailing the large expense which the

average hospital has no funds to meet. First by exchange of instructors. Often the high school or college needs and should have taught a course in Home Nursing and the Care of Well Children. Who is better prepared to teach such courses than the instructor in the school of nursing? She can be exchanged for an instructor in Household Economics, Bacteriology, Chemistry or Psychology. One small hospital school which I know has three such courses being successfully taught by instructors from two institutions in the same city, without any expenses.

It is important to note at this point that the high school or college will not exchange their courses unless the school of nursing has an instructor who is educationally as well qualified to teach as their own. The hospital may also open its diet kitchen for practice work which is sorely needed by schools of domestic science.

Through closer coöperation small schools in the same city may bring about a high standard of teaching through coöperation in the establishment of a single course of instruction for a group of schools under an exceptionally able supervising instructor. Such a plan makes it possible to obtain very much better instruction for all schools for a much less outlay of money by the individual school. The schools which have tried this plan have found there is nothing to fear from loss of individuality, as each school has something very valuable to contribute to the whole. Through close coöperation of the principals and instructors of these schools a uniform procedure has been evolved as well as uniform equipment and other teaching facilities.

The central school is undoubtedly the solution for the states which have small hospitals in isolated localities with a few larger hospitals in the important cities. The students entering through the larger institutions and central school for the preliminary course and being assigned to certain hospitals for general training and certain other hospitals for special training. Such a school could be maintained if all the hospitals pooled their clinical and financial resources and centralized the teaching and supervision. For the details of this plan, I will refer to Miss Goodrich's article which appeared in the April number of *THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING*.

(To be continued)

We devote public appropriations and endowments to the maintenance of law schools, engineering schools, business schools, and schools of journalism. Is it not an astonishing thing, when one thinks about it, that nursing should have been regarded as less of a public service than any of these? It can hardly remain so regarded, in a country which has attained to equal suffrage.—*The New Republic*, July 12, 1922.